7: International Bank N, S-4 (1951) 1952 MH1 Iraq MH1

241 aration of the soil. Similarly, small stationary threshers may offer a better alternative than large harvesting combines to the present methods of threshing by flaying and the tramping of animals. The government should pay at least as much attention to the task of getting simple, inexpensive tools into the hands of the cultivators as to the much more ambitious program of agricultural mechanization. [412] Good hand tools, for example, are almost nonexistent. Improvement in draft animals is also necessary. While the supply of draft animals cannot be increased rapidly, it is possible to get animals of greater strength and endurance by better feeding and selection.

In the longer run, however, there is no doubt that mechanization of agriculture will assume growing importance. Physically, the country with its flat broad plains is ideally suited to mechanization although the canals and ditches in the irrigation zone offer [464] some impediments to the use of machinery. Moreover, even now there are labor shortages at sowing and harvest times in some parts of the country, particularly in the North. In the future such shortages may become really acute as manpower is drawn from the land to take advantage of the new employment opportunities created by the over-all development program and as some of the fellahin working on land now under cultivation leave to settle new land. Under such circumstances mechanization may become the principal means of maintaining and expanding agricultural output. In its policy respecting mechanization the government will need to steer a careful course. On the one hand, it will want to keep some check on mechanization as long and wherever there is danger of displacing fellahin before alternative means of employment become available; on the other hand, it will find it desirable to accelerate mechanization whenever labor shortages become serious. Through its control over imports and credit, the government possesses effective methods of influencing the rate of mechanization.

241 407 427 The United States Lend-Lease Program gave mechanization its first impetus. At present there are probably about 170 combines and 550 tractors in operation in the country, with about half of the number concentrated in the provinces of Mosul and Baghdad. In addition, 75 combines and 81 tractors are owned and made

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COTTON IN IRAQ

the plants to vegetate without setting squares and bolls and that it also increases the period of maturity, making the plants more susceptible to damage by insects late in the season. This is simply another of many problems in cotton culture which need to be studied carefully if the crop is to be expanded as rapidly as the government hopes. 248

Cotton usually is thinned to two plants per hill and weeded only about twice. This, together with the heavy irrigations, leaves the patches weedy. Farmers as a rule do very little cultivation except around the plant itself at the time of weeding. Then they try to pull the soil from the top of the ridge to leave the plants in the center.

The equipment used by the tenants themselves is in sharp contrast to the tractors now employed in land preparation. The only tools used in ridging are a pointed spade and a short-handled hoe. This is the same instrument used for planting, thinning, weeding, and the limited amount of cultivation. [412]

Such practices are obviously laborious and time-consuming. One of the United States observers estimated that it takes three women all day to plant a quarter of an acre. Even at the low wage scale, equivalent to 25 cents a day, this costs $3.00 per acre. It would be less expensive to use mechanical equipment, even though the tractor drivers are paid the equivalent of about $1.25 per day, five times as much as common labor. [465]

Complete mechanization may come quickly in the thinly settled new areas of the north, but in the denser, old areas labor is tied to the land in long-

—Photo Courtesy of E. R. Collier

In Iraq, as in most of the Middle East, cotton is brought to the gin in large burlap bags, ginned, and pressed into bales weighing between 400 and 500 pounds, when new equipment is used. Gins in Iraq wrap the cotton on all sides and wind a continuous band around the bale.